

21 October 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD


SUBJECT: Conversation with Mr. Wilfred H. Rommel, Assistant
Director for Legislative Reference, Bureau of the
Budget, re Agency Retirement Legislation

1. This morning I called Mr. Rommel to say that I would appreciate his giving his earliest possible attention to our proposal for amended Agency retirement legislation which we had just hand carried to his office. I mentioned my earlier conversation with Mr. Roger Jones on the same subject, and told Mr. Rommel that if he had any questions about our proposal we would be delighted to meet with him at any time.

2. He asked if our proposal was merely an adaptation of the provisions of the Daniels/McGee bill and I said this was all that was involved. He said he foresaw no problems but had to check the matter out with one individual before he could give us a reading on the prospects of our proposal. He said if this individual saw no objections he thought the matter could be dealt with very quickly. He said he would let me know the results as soon as possible.

3. Mr. Rommel remarked that State and Defense were submitting comparable proposals.

STATINTL


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Richard Harwood and Laurence Stern

Sweig Epitomizes Those Hill Aides Behind Scenes Who Run Congress

NOW IS THE time to erect, somewhere under the Capitol dome, a monument to the Unknown Administrative Assistant. It would celebrate the subterranean middle men who make the deals, write the bills, promote or subvert causes and generally run the congressional establishment.

The latest example is the furor over Martin Sweig, suspended administrative assistant to House Speaker John W. McCormack. When it is fully unravelled, the Sweig case should be incorporated into fifth grade civics texts and wherever else American children learn about the exercise of power in their national capital.

Sweig epitomizes the legion of legislative bureaucrats who are responsible to no electoral constituency, who have no need to pander to voters. They supposedly wear only one badge of loyalty—to the boss.

Yet quite often these unknown "public" servants become shadow senators and congressmen for private interest groups—businesses, unions, industrial lobbying groups, churches, government agencies, sometimes even foreign powers.

Remember the case of former Senate Majority Secretary Robert G. (Bobby) Baker, who juggled an astonishing array of clients from his Capitol office with the dexterity of a Houdini. Finally the game got even too complicated for him.

Staff directors, chief counsels, subcommittee economists, legislative assistants—all these varied ranks of aides propel the clanking machine of Congress. They fan public issues, such as the Hill-based anti-ABM movement. They can influence the price of sugar, the level of oil imports or the purchase of new weapon systems.

A recently released transcript of the House Armed Service Committee's hear-



Harwood

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ings on the Pentagon's \$22.4 billion military procurement budget provides a remarkable vignette of this kind of power.

THE PLOT centers on committee counsel John R. Blandford, who browbeats service secretaries, generals and even congressional superiors with the gusto of a top sergeant.

During the hearings Blandford and his boss, Rep. L. Mendel Rivers (D-S.C.) were ragging the Air Force for not supporting their pet airplane, Northrop Aviation's F-5 "Freedom Fighter," a little jet that the Air Force refuses to put in its own inventory. The Air Force also balked at spending its money to subsidize production of the plane for sales to "friendly Free World forces" such as Thailand, Spain and South Vietnam.

Blandford, nominally an employee of the Armed Service Committee, chastised Air Force Secretary Robert C. Seamans Jr. for not supporting the F-5 subsidy.

"... You should be enthusiastically supporting this because if you don't, you are liable to end up supporting it out of your own hide, and then you might find the Congress will say you had your chance to do something about this a couple of years ago and you didn't take the chance when we gave it to you."

Then Blandford com-

plained to Seamans that the Air Force acted "without any real enthusiasm" in going along with the \$14 million subsidy to Northrop that Rivers stuck on the supplemental military authorization.

"You are going to have to go before the Appropriations Committee and you are going to either have to support the \$14 million in the supplemental or take the attitude of, 'well, it is not for us so we really don't care,'" Blandford scolded. "What I'm trying to point out to you is you really should care, because I think it may come back to haunt you one of these days."

Even among the cynical, this haughty treatment of an Air Force Secretary by a congressional aide is an eye-brow-hoisting event. Rivers himself, not exactly a blushing violet, was far more deferential in his style of address.

The net effect of this onslaught was that Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard reversed the Pentagon's position and agreed to ask for \$52 million to finance development of a "Freedom Fighter."

It was noted with asperity by some members of the committee that this money came out of \$52 million in savings resulting from the Defense Department's cancellation of a fifth C-5A squadron.

Early this year when the subsidy to Northrop for a souped up F-5 was first foisted on the Air Force by the combine of Rivers and Blandford, the committee counsel felt moved to assure the members of the committee, "I don't own any Northrop stock." It would probably have been more reassuring to all of his congressional employers if Blandford had gone on to make an even fuller financial disclosure.

INQUIRIES ON GREEN BERET AFFAIR

Agency officers should refrain from volunteering comment on the Green Beret affair. For the information and guidance of Agency personnel who are interested and concerned, these are the essential facts in the case insofar as CIA is concerned.

1. CIA has no command relationship to or position of authority over the Green Berets;
2. Whatever transpired between the Green Berets and Chuyen was undertaken exclusively on the Green Berets' own authority and responsibility;
3. Chuyen was not at any time an agent of or otherwise connected with CIA;
4. As a matter of policy based on moral, legal, and professional grounds, CIA does not indulge in assassinations.
5. The Director did decline to permit Agency officers to testify at the trial because it appeared virtually certain that sensitive operations unrelated to the Chuyen case would be disclosed in the process.